

Edward Morrison, Deputy Mayor Who Helped John Lennon, Dies at 85

Edward Morrison after being nominated for governor by the New York State Liberal Party in 1974. He turned out to be a stand-in, however: The Liberals endorsed Hugh L. Carey, after Mr. Carey won the Democratic nomination. Associated Press

By **Sam Roberts**

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Edward A. Morrison, a former New York deputy mayor whose avowal that John Lennon was a valuable cultural asset to the city helped Lennon avoid deportation in the 1970s, died on Saturday in Ocala, Fla. He was 85.

His son Andrew said the cause was congestive heart failure.

Mr. Morrison, a lawyer, was among the advisers to Lennon and his wife, the artist and singer Yoko Ono, when Lennon's residency in the United States was challenged by the Nixon administration in 1972.

He was also a friend of the couple's; Lennon and Ms. Ono had attended Mr. Morrison's swearing-in as deputy mayor in 1972.

Lennon had been living with Ms. Ono in New York for about a year when his immigration troubles began. They stemmed from his pleading guilty to a misdemeanor charge of cannabis possession in London in 1968. The White House contended that American immigration law barred the admission of convicted drug offenders. In 1973, the United States issued a deportation order.

Leon Wildes, Lennon's lawyer, discovered that despite the government's claim, deportation was not automatic. Immigration officials, he said, could exercise prosecutorial discretion on the basis of humanitarian, political and other criteria.

(Moreover, it turned out that the drug cited in the 1968 case was not marijuana but hashish, which was not covered by the American immigration law.)

By the early 1970s, Lennon was widely known not just for his music as a former member of the Beatles but also for his antiwar activism, and F.B.I. files later revealed that the White House had wanted to deport him largely because of his potential to sway newly enfranchised voters against President Richard M. Nixon and the Vietnam War. (The federal voting age had been lowered from 21 to 18 in 1971.)

Mr. Wildes's son Michael said in a phone interview on Tuesday that Mr. Morrison had provided valuable help "in keeping the case in the public eye and building up public sentiment against the deportation efforts."

Mr. Morrison's boss, Mayor John V. Lindsay, also testified on Lennon's behalf, as did a host of artists, musicians and writers, including Joan Baez, Bob Dylan,

John Updike, Joyce Carol Oates, Jasper Johns, Leonard Bernstein and Joseph Heller — all arguing, like Mr. Morrison, that Lennon was a valuable cultural asset to the United States.

The campaign proved successful. After Nixon's resignation in 1974, the government relented, saying it no longer objected to Mr. Lennon's presence in the United States. He was granted a green card in 1976 but was murdered, in 1980, before he could apply for citizenship.

Mr. Morrison was Lindsay's liaison to the City Council and the Board of Estimate, the legislative body that voted on city contracts, franchises and zoning. (It was declared unconstitutional in 1989.)

In 1974, Mr. Morrison, a vice chairman of the New York State Liberal Party, was nominated for governor by the party. He was, however, just a stand-in: The Liberals endorsed Hugh L. Carey after Mr. Carey won the Democratic nomination.

Later, as chairman of the state Crime Victims Compensation Board, Mr. Morrison implemented legislation that took the profits from books and other income earned by convicted criminals and diverted the proceeds to their victims.

Edward Allen Morrison was born on April 9, 1933, in Brooklyn to Samuel and Sadie (Lansberg) Morrison. His father was a dentist and his mother an elementary-school teacher. The younger Mr. Morrison attended Stuyvesant High School, Brooklyn College and Columbia Law School.

After leaving government, he practiced law in New York City and in the Hudson Valley before moving to Florida six years ago.

He married Elaine Morrison (who was no relation, but friends had introduced them because they had the same surname). She survives him, along with their sons, Dean, Russell, Andrew and William, and eight grandchildren. ✓

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